

and if i get scared, you're always around by teamcap

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Summary:

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"I'm gonna leave New York, I think," Eddie says. And he doesn't say her name, but Richie gets it.

and if i get scared, you're always around

Author's Note:

hi! i haven't written for It in a while but this is a long overdue commission for my friend alex who is the best. idk how i feel about this but hopefully it makes sense :-)

title is from i got you babe by sonny & cher. in the song playing in eddie's apartment is come softly to me by the fleetwoods (because alex wanted it to be incorporated and i didn't really know how else to do it)

no betas we die like men

In the water, after, Richie feels calm. For the first time since his phone rang and he heard Mike's voice on the other end, he feels calm. It's dead - like, actually dead, they fucking won, holy shit - and he's washing dirt and blood off of his glasses in the quarry water, and Bill is trying to dunk Mike but he's not strong enough, and Bev lets out a loud laugh and they're alive, and Richie can't ask for much more, he supposes. When he puts his glasses back on it takes him a minute to adjust, and for a second he feels just like he did when he got pulled out of the deadlights, but it passes. Bev notices, though, he knows she does, sees the way he rolls his shoulders and shakes his head. He's not sure if she knows because she'd been stuck in them once, too, or if she still has a sixth sense for Richie the way she did when they were teenagers, the way he does for - he shakes his head again. Bev leaves Ben's side, swims over to Richie and loops her arm through his.

"What'd you see?" She asks, almost too casually.

"Nothin'," Richie lies, "whole lot of nothing."

"You should know by now you can't pull your shit with me like you can with everyone else, Tozier," Bev says, grins a little. "I know you."

Richie says nothing for about a minute, watches his friends - god, he has friends - mess around in the water like they're kids, looks to the rocks and sees Eddie, tentatively, put his feet in the water, and sighs. "Eddie died. In my fucking, vision or whatever. It happened just like things actually happened. Like, I was watching it like a movie and I got caught and he saved me and then he got fucking impaled. That fucked up or what?"

Bev takes a second, treads water and considers his words. "You tell him yet?" Richie's blood runs cold, how does she know, and he hates her, but he doesn't.

"Tell him what?"

"Don't be a shit, you know what," Bev says.

"I never even told you. I never told anyone, how do you even know," Richie groans. He takes his glasses off again, like that'll make her go away or end the conversation.

"I know you, Rich," Bev says lightly.

"I hate you."

"Yeah, well," she shrugs. Finally Richie decides, fuck it, I've never told anyone, barely even myself, but I can start now, and he almost has the words out when Ben swims over to them.

"Eddie insists we all go to the hospital just to be safe. Open wounds or something," he says. "He thinks we're going to get some kind of flesh eating bacteria from the water."

"If this water was contaminated with flesh eating bacteria we would have all died when we were fifteen," Richie says as they swim to the shore and get out of the water.

"Try telling Eddie that," Ben says.

"Try telling me what, what did you say, asshole?" Eddie says to Richie, but there's no fire behind his words.

"I said I think you watch the news too much, Eds, I don't think there's as many cases of people coming into contact with flesh eating bacteria as you think there are."

"I never said flesh eating bacteria you dick, I said some of us have cuts and shit, open wounds, higher chance of infection from the dirty water."

"Whatever, Eds," Richie says, moving to pat at the bandage on Eddie's

cheek.

"Don't touch me you shit, that's disgusting, God knows what was in that water."

"Boys," Bev says, scolds, and for a second, it feels so familiar that Richie has to remind himself they aren't fifteen anymore.

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They're all fine. Obviously. They're fine, minor injuries, Eddie's just dramatic, and they're back at the inn by midnight.

"I'm fucking starving," Richie says, taking the shot Mike hands him and throwing it back. It burns on the way down and reminds him he's alive. "You guys want pizza?"

Pizza delivery seems like something way too normal for Derry, Richie thinks, given his perception of the town. *Hey, we've got demon clowns and a fuckton of missing and murdered people and Domino's, if all the child murder doesn't ruin your appetite!* He hates Derry, but whatever, at least there's pizza. They finish all three boxes in what seems like record time, they all even take one for the team and eat a slice of disgusting Hawaiian pizza for Stan, because it was his favorite. They don't talk about that, or what they've been through in the last few hours. Hell, they don't talk much at all, not even Richie. And then it's past midnight, and they're old now, kind of, and they have five rooms booked at the inn - not six, because Mike lives here - but they only use three. Mike doesn't go back to the library, he follows Bill up to his room, and Richie's not sure what that's about. He'll ask later. And

Bev goes to bed next, asks Ben to come with her, and he says he'll be there soon. Eddie doesn't say anything to Richie when he leaves, he never did, but Richie knows.

"So," Ben says after the echo of Eddie's door closing comes down to them at the bar, "how're you holding up, Rich?"

It's the first time anyone has asked, really. And Richie's not sure if he means Stan being dead or getting caught in the deadlights or what, but it doesn't matter. He knows his answer all the same. "Can I tell you something?"

"Course," Ben says, doesn't seem put off that it isn't a direct answer. He pours two shots and slides one across the bar to Richie.

It burns going down, still. Richie doesn't care. "I'm gay."

"Okay," Ben says, no hesitation.

"I'm gay," Richie repeats, "and I was in love with Eddie when we were kids, and I still am now."

"Okay," Ben says again.

"That's it? Just 'okay'?"

"What else do you want me to say, Rich? If you want the truth I think I always knew you had a thing for Eddie, I think we all knew, but I was never gonna bring it up."

Richie deflates a little, but he's sort of relieved. "Thanks, I guess. I've never told anyone."

"Which part?"

"Any of it," Richie says. And Ben does what Ben does, comes around to the other side of the bar and hugs him tight.

"I love you, Richie," he says when he lets go. "I'm proud of you."

The words echo in Richie's head long after Ben goes upstairs, and they don't stop after Richie goes too. He doesn't go into his room. Instead, he he pushes open the second door on the right side of the hall. Eddie isn't asleep, Richie can tell, and he hopes voices don't carry too much in old buildings. He lays on top of the blankets, close to Eddie but not too close, and if Eddie reaches over five minutes later and laces their fingers together, well.

"I'm gonna leave New York, I think," Eddie says. And he doesn't say her name, but Richie gets it.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. I need to go somewhere else. I'll have to go get my stuff, though."

"I'll go with you," Richie says, but he knows Eddie already knows that.

"Okay. Night, Rich."

"Night, Eds."

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They leave Derry the next morning. All of them, even Mike. He packs all of his stuff into a few bags and throws them into the back of Bill's fancy car, and nobody asks. Bev leaves with Ben. They don't say where they're going, and Richie doesn't ask, because he knows he'll hear from Bev sooner or later.

"Do you think we'll forget again?" She asks before they leave, and Richie doesn't have an answer. Everything feels unsteady, like all of it could slip away from him at any moment, but he thinks he might be the only one who feels that way.

"No," Mike says. "No, I don't think we will."

Richie watches him leave with Bill, then watches Bev get into Ben's car and wave at him and Eddie as they drive past and away from

Derry, hopefully for good. Hopefully.

Richie follows Eddie's car out of Derry and all the way to New York. Halfway there he calls his agent and tells him he's staying with a friend in New York for a while, and he'll let him know when he needs a new flight back. When, he says, but he thinks *if*. If he comes back, if he doesn't have to fight another evil fucking demon clown, God, his life is insane. If he can leave Eddie again after all this. It seems unlikely.

He parks on the street behind Eddie when they get to his building. Eddie gets out of his car first, looks around nervously, like he's expecting someone or something to jump out at him. When he doesn't see whatever it is he's looking for, he motions for Richie to get out of his car.

"What exactly are we doing here, Eds?"

"Packing," Eddie says simply. Richie doesn't push the fact that Eddie's about to leave his wife of fifteen years, because he doesn't think Eddie wants to talk about it, but he does let out a breathy laugh. "What, asshole?"

"Sorry, I just assumed you packed not only all of your stuff but also the belongings of everyone in this building when you showed up in Derry with those suitcases. I mean, they're bigger than you are," Richie teases.

"Shut up," Eddie says, holding the door open for Richie to get into the building. "I fucking hate you." The elevator ride up to Eddie's

floor is silent, but not uncomfortably so, and Richie immediately follows him to his apartment when they get off. He has a vague memory of a sixteen year old Bev shaking her head and saying Richie followed Eddie around like a lost puppy, and he hates her for being so goddamn smart even back then, but he doesn't really.

"Damn, Eds," Richie says when they walk into the apartment, letting out a low whistle. "Nice place you got here. Your boring little job must pay you a pretty penny." Eddie rolls his eyes and goes back into the only bedroom and reemerges a second later with another suitcase the size of the ones he brought to the inn. Richie thinks of about sixty different smartass comments he could make, but he holds them all back. Eddie looks a little sick as he starts grabbing stuff from different rooms and throwing it into the suitcase. "Can I help?"

"I got it. Thanks though," he says, and Richie nods. "You can look around if you want."

Richie does. He's standing in the living room and he feels out of place there, like everything in the room is colored inside the lines except for him. He's outside the lines, erratic, all over the place. He doesn't fit in with everything around him, but he's not going to leave. Behind him, Eddie is grabbing books off of a bookshelf and throwing them into the suitcase. *You really need those*, he wants to ask, doesn't, because maybe Eddie really does need them. Thinks he needs them. Richie isn't sure if there's a difference.

He takes slow, careful steps around the apartment, afraid that anything he touches might break. It's clean. Too clean, almost, like a hospital waiting room. Like people – Eddie, his mind supplies, but he shakes that away – are taking up space there, living there, but not because they want to. There's nothing particularly exciting about the apartment, really. No colors that aren't white or beige or odd shades

of blues and greens. They have a CD player on one of the shelves, still turned on, an old 50s song coming out of the speakers. Richie recognizes it, but he wishes he didn't. The kitchen is the same, and the bathroom, and the bedroom, too. Richie pushes the door open and steps inside while Eddie is tearing apart the kitchen, and he takes it all in. It doesn't look lived in. His bedroom in Chicago is messy, sure, but there's an unmade bed and some old movie posters on the wall and shoes strewn wherever, because he lives there. He takes up space there, does it on purpose, isn't trying to hide.

It's a small room. There's a queen sized bed, a dresser, two closets. Nothing is out of place. It looks like it's been cleaned as if some hot shot photographer for a magazine is coming to take pictures of it. Richie hates it. The only thing even a little interesting about it is that in his rush to throw half the apartment in his suitcase, Eddie left his closet doors open. His closet isn't perfectly organized, but it almost is. Suits in the back, shirts next, then pants, then a hanging shoe rack, but nothing is color coded or organized by sleeve length or any shit like that, and Richie wonders for a second if that's what's left of Eddie's rebellious phase coming through. It isn't much, but it makes Richie smile. He remembers a fifteen year old Eddie walking ahead of him through the front door into Sonia Kasprak's living room with his arms full of posters they'd gotten from the comic book store down the street, ignoring his mother's shouts about the paint and his clean room, and spending an hour putting them up all over the bare walls while they listened to one of the mixtapes Richie had made for him. Richie had never been as proud of someone in his life as he was of Eddie in that moment.

The apartment has a bathroom down the hall from the bedroom, and Richie goes that way next. It's white, clean, nothing out of place. The medicine cabinet above the sink is open, though, and Richie really can't help it. He looks through it for a second, going through the names of the different medicines. Once, when he was about sixteen, Stan had teasingly asked him if he memorized Eddie's entire medicine cabinet. Richie laughed it off and said no, but he had, almost. Not in a weird way, he just knew which ones Eddie really

needed to take and which ones Sonia insisted he needed to take even if he didn't. Of course, Eddie had stopped taking all of them by then, save one or two he actually needed, but they still sat in the bathroom, and Richie would look sometimes. He recognizes all the names on the bottles, and he wonders for a second how similar Eddie's wife is to Sonia Kaspbrak.

When he goes back out into the living room, Eddie is zipping up his suitcase. "Ready," he says. Richie feels proud despite himself, proud like he did when Eddie put those posters all over his childhood bedroom. He goes over to the front door and holds it open for Eddie and his suitcase, and he's about to close the door when Eddie pushes it back open. Richie watches, curious, as he goes over to the CD player and stops it, takes out the CD, and puts it in an empty case laying on the table and brings it with him when he comes back over. "Okay."

Except Richie doesn't move, doesn't take his hand off the doorknob or say anything. His entire worldview is focused on the CD in Eddie's hands. It's not a proper CD, but a burned one, a mixtape. Instead of a title, it just has an E written on it in chicken scratch writing. And, of course Richie had recognized that song, he recognizes the E, he made that damn mixtape.

"You still have that?" He asks in disbelief. There's no way. It can't be – Richie had made that one the week before Eddie moved out of Derry, there's no way it's the same one. But it is. He knows it is.

"Um," Eddie says.

"Holy shit," Richie says, "holy shit, Eds. I can't believe you kept that."

“I couldn’t get rid of it. The other ones – all the ones you made me as gifts for my birthday or whatever – I don’t know what happened to them. But I had to keep this one.” And, okay, that’s too much for Richie, because that tape is filled with the oldest, cheesiest love songs Richie knew, holy shit. His intent had been to tell Eddie when he gave it to him, but then he didn’t actually give it to him for two more years after he made it, because he was scared. He still is. “Rich?”

“I have an apartment in New York. We can go there.”

“Okay,” Eddie says. He doesn’t put the mixtape into the suitcase - he carries it out, instead, in his hands. It makes Richie’s stomach flip.

Richie’s New York apartment isn’t that far from Eddie’s, actually, and something about that makes Richie want to scream about how unfair everything is, how unfair it is that he could have spent the last ten years passing Eddie on the street without even knowing it, but he doesn’t. Well, he does a little, in the privacy of his car, but not once he parks and gets out in front of his building. He doesn’t say anything when Eddie gets out of his car, or when he comes over with his suitcase, or when they go through the front door of the building or get into the elevator or walk down two hallways to Richie’s apartment. He doesn’t say anything while he fishes his keys out of his jacket pocket and gets the one to this apartment. His hands are shaking, and he hopes Eddie doesn’t notice.

It’s a nice apartment, Richie knows. Not like he’s a millionaire, or something, but he’s comfortable and he wanted a nice place. “There’s a guest room over there,” he says, the first thing he’s said since they left Eddie’s place. He waits until Eddie takes his suitcase into the room Richie pointed at to go into the kitchen and down a shot of

whatever is closest to him. Something in him wishes Ben was there to do a shot with him and to tell him he has nothing to be scared of anymore, but he's not.

"Is this where you live?" Eddie asks, and Richie jumps out of his skin. He didn't know Eddie had come out of the guest room. As discreetly as he can, he moves the shot glass down into the sink, like he has something to hide. He does.

"Uh, sometimes," Richie says. "I have a place in Chicago, too. That's where I usually am."

"Oh," Eddie nods. He doesn't say anything else, and neither does Richie, he just watches Eddie flip the mixtape around in his hands.

"You, uh. You can stay here. If you need to, or whatever," Richie says. Eddie just nods, and Richie prays to God or whoever that the ground beneath him will open up and swallow him whole. It's the first really awkward silence they've had since the night they got to Derry, the only one Richie can even remember – when they were kids, Richie always had something to say, and Eddie always had something to say back. Richie thinks this is the only time in his life he's never had some comment or joke or *something*. He hates it. He stands in the kitchen, hands gripping the counter, watching Eddie mess with that dumb fucking mixtape and waiting for one of them to say something for what seems like forever and, finally, he can't take it any longer. "Why do you still have that?"

"What?" Eddie asks.

"That tape," Richie clarifies. "Why do you still have it? I mean. I

made you, like, at least fifty of those. Why that one, I guess.”

“I told you. I couldn’t get rid of it.” That’s still too much for Richie, really, but he takes a breath and walks out of the kitchen and into the living room.

“I don’t know what to do with that,” he says.

“What?”

“What you just said, genius, I don’t know what to do with that. What does that mean? Why couldn’t you get rid of it? It’s just a stupid mixtape, Eddie, it doesn’t mean anything.”

“Oh.”

Richie shakes his head. “It – it didn’t mean anything.”

“I heard you the first time, asshole,” Eddie bites back.

“To you, Eds, it didn’t mean anything to *you*. When I gave it to you. I gave it to you a week before you moved, okay, if it had meant anything to you then you would have told me before you moved. So it didn’t mean anything.” Eddie looks at him like he just grew a second head.

“You’re stupid,” he says. “What are you talking about?”

Richie groans. "I'm not good at this, okay?"

"Obviously," Eddie says. "But I don't even know what *this* is, Rich. What are you talking about?"

"That – God. That tape. I made it for you -,"

"I know that."

"Don't interrupt me, this is hard enough," Richie says, and Eddie backs off a little. "I made it for you, like, two years before I gave it to you. And I was gonna give it to you when I made it for you but I didn't. I waited. And I gave it to you a week before you moved away because I guess I thought that would be easier or something and then it didn't even matter because I forgot you anyway but I didn't want to and I -,"

"Richie," Eddie says, gently. "Take a breath."

Richie does. "I need you to tell me why you kept it before I make myself look like an idiot."

"You always look like an idiot," Eddie grins.

"Fuck you."

“Richie,” he repeats, quieter. “I think you know why I kept it.”

It’s as close to a confession as Richie thinks he might ever get, but it’s good enough for him. He takes a deep breath, like it’ll help him say to Eddie what he’s wanted to tell him since he was a teenager. “Yeah. Yeah, I think I do. I, uh. Me too. If you’re saying what I think you’re saying.”

“What,” Eddie says, “Can you please say something that makes sense?”

“You’re such a jackass,” Richie says, but he’s grinning. “I love you.”

Eddie looks winded. For a split second, Richie worries he just ruined everything, but then Eddie smiles, just a little. “Okay.”

“That’s it?”

“Yeah,” Eddie says. “That’s it.” Neither of them make any moves toward each other, and Eddie keeps twirling the tape around in his hands, and Richie loves him.

“Did we miss our shot?” He doesn’t mean to say it out loud, actually, but whatever.

“What?”

“You – you’re married,” Richie says, and Eddie says,

“I left her. You were there.”

“Okay, yeah, but you’re still married. There’s, like, legal shit you have to do or whatever. And we’re old,” he says, and that makes Eddie start laughing.

“We’re old?”

“Yeah,” Richie says. “We’re like, the same age our parents were when we were kids. We’re old.”

“You might be, but I’m not,” Eddie says.

“Fuck off, you know what I mean.”

“Rich,” Eddie says, almost a whisper. “Do you honestly think that just because we’re older that it means we can’t do this?”

“Do what?”

Eddie takes a deep breath, puts the tape down on the coffee table, and looks Richie dead in the eye. “I’ve been in love with you since I was fifteen. Even if I forgot for a while.”

“Okay,” Richie says. “Me too. Well, thirteen. But, me too. Okay.”

“You’re rambling.”

“Yeah,” Richie laughs, and Eddie steps closer to him. Richie is taller, so he has to lean down, but he doesn’t care. When he kisses him, he feels like he’s standing on solid ground for the first time since Mike called him. And, later, maybe, they’ll talk a little more. Later, when Richie isn’t so scared that things could still fall apart around him. Later, he’s sure, they’ll find out where Bill and Mike and Ben and Bev are, and they’ll all meet up somewhere in the middle, and they’ll do whatever the fuck adults do when they hang out, Richie isn’t really sure. Later, Richie will ask Eddie if he wants to move to Chicago with him, move in with him, do everything with him. Later.

That night, Richie orders them pizza and he watches Eddie take everything out of his suitcase and reorganize it, because he’d been in a rush before, and he loves him. And, for the first time in years, he feels like he could be okay.

Author's Note:

thank u for reading my lil incoherent mess! i'm
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